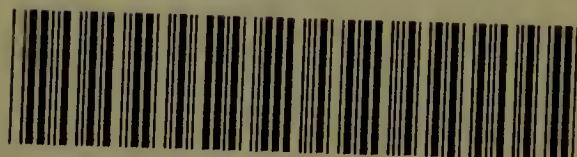


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# ANCIENT GAELIC MEDICAL MANUSCRIPTS.<sup>1</sup>

By GEORGE MACKAY, M.D., F.R.C.S.F.

GENTLEMEN,—Permit me, in the first place, to take this opportunity of thanking you for the honour you have done me in electing me your President for this year. That your choice should have thus fallen, in view of the fact that the capital of Scotland and the birthplace of the Caledonian Medical Society was to be revisited, enhances the value of the distinction, and I beg you to accept my grateful thanks. It is not for me to cast doubts upon the wisdom of your choice. I can only promise you to play the part to the best of my ability, and assure you that I yield to none in my devotion to those sentiments which bring us together, and which have been so happily treated of by my learned predecessor in his presidential address to you last year in London.

Since we last assembled in Edinburgh, in 1898, events have occurred to which I may be permitted to make some reference. The munificent benefaction by Mr. Andrew Carnegie cannot be passed unnoticed. We are deeply indebted to him for his splendid generosity to the universities of Scotland, and we hope that under the wise direction of the trustees to whom he has committed the task of administration, the cause of learning may be advanced without weakening that sense of manliness and independence and parental self-sacrifice which has contributed so largely to the formation of the Scottish national character. Many changes have occurred in the teaching staff of our *Alma Mater*. I regret that the pressure of duties connected with to-morrow's graduation ceremonial prevents Sir William Turner from being with us to-day, but I am sure that to most of us the elevation of our great master in anatomy to be the Principal of the University of Edinburgh was an event of the highest interest to ourselves, and of the greatest value to our old school.

Addressing an audience composed chiefly of Edinburgh graduates, I may also be expected to refer to the passing away of some friends and teachers—the beloved Maclagan, the inimitable Rutherford, the manly Duncan, the genial Grainger Stewart. Last, but not least, and especially in this place, I

<sup>1</sup> Presidential address delivered to the members of the Caledonian Medical Society at the Annual Meeting held in Edinburgh on 22nd July, 1904.



cannot fail to record my own personal sense of loss in the retiral of Argyll Robertson. In the history of Caledonian medicine and surgery his name must ever hold an honoured place.

Many of you revisiting your old hospital, cannot fail to be struck with the recent additions which have been made to the buildings. I trust that during your visit you may have time to inspect the handsome new pavilions devoted to gynæcology, diseases of the ear and throat, and that in which we are met to-day, the new pavilion for eye diseases. Our best thanks are due to the managers of the Royal Infirmary for kindly permitting us to meet here.

Gentlemen, knowing the interest which many of you have already evinced in the study of Celtic literature, and in the hope that I may render some service to the wider circle of readers of our *Journal*, I propose to offer you some observations this afternoon on the Gaelic medical MSS. preserved in Edinburgh.

To most people in this country, even medical men, it comes as a surprise to learn that any Gaelic medical works exist. Partly on account of the rarity of the literature, partly on account of its inaccessibility to all save a few who reside near the great central libraries, partly owing to the want of medical knowledge on the part of the would-be translator, and largely owing to the difficulties of deciphering the curious handwriting and forms of contractions employed, their contents have remained practically sealed even to eminent Gaelic scholars.

Through the kindness of Professor Mackinnon, and with the invaluable assistance of Mr. A. O. Anderson, Carnegie Research Scholar in History, I am able to-day to lay before you some facts, which I trust may be of interest, as to the Gaelic medical manuscripts extant in Scotland. I think that, while I say Scotland, really Edinburgh is the repository, the sole repository, of these works.<sup>1</sup>

First of all, there is one important manuscript in the keeping of the SOCIETY OF SCOTTISH ANTIQUARIES. It is a Gaelic translation of the "Lilium Medicanum" of Bernard Gordon, Professor of Physic in the University of Montpellier, and was published by him in the year 1305. Reference to it has already been made by Professor Mackinnon in the *Caledonian Medical Journal* (July, 1902, p. 151). It undoubtedly belonged to the Beaton, the famous physicians in Skye, who

<sup>1</sup> Other Gaelic medical works exist in London and in Dublin, but I speak to-day only of MSS. known to exist in Scotland.

came of the old Islay stock. By the courtesy of Dr. Anderson and Dr. David Christison, of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, I am able to show two photographs of this work, taken under Mr. A. O. Anderson's supervision. You will see that it is a volume (Plate I) of substantial size, measuring about 11 by 7½ by 2 inches. It contains about 350 leaves. The second photograph (Plate II) illustrates a specimen page (171). It shows by the heading of the page, "An 4 particul," that it is the opening of the fourth part of the book, and exhibits the end of one chapter and beginning of the next.

Secondly, then, in the EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, among what is known as the "Laing" collection of manuscripts, there is one Gaelic medical manuscript (MS. XXI) from which already the Society has, through Professor Mackinnon, been enlightened as to the genealogy of the Macbeths or Beaton, the great medical family of Islay, Mull, and the Western Highlands. This same manuscript is being further studied by a member of our Society, Dr. W. A. Mackintosh, of Stirling, and I hope that he will this afternoon tell us something more about it. The manuscript was bought by the late Dr. Laing, of the Signet Library, at a sale in Edinburgh in 1835.

Thirdly, I pass to the ADVOCATES' LIBRARY, which contains by far the richest collection of these documents. The catalogue of Gaelic manuscripts in the Advocates' Library contains a list of sixty-six manuscripts, and, in addition, a number of more modern manuscripts, vocabularies, transcriptions, &c. These latter manuscripts supply thirty-eight entries. Manuscripts I to IVa in the catalogue belong to the *Faculty of Advocates*, and of these, three (Nos. II, III, and IV) contain medical matter. Manuscripts V to XXXI belong to the *Kilbride Collection*, and of these, eleven (Nos. X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVII, XVIII, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXVII, and half of XXVI) are entirely medical. Manuscripts XXXII to LXV belong to the *Highland and Agricultural Society*, and of these, Nos. XXXIII and LX are almost exclusively medical, and No. XLI is bound in a piece of medical manuscript. These manuscripts are in several cases very composite, containing several, usually incomplete, manuscripts bound together. Their history cannot well be traced very far, except where notes of date and place, or owner's name written on the margin, gives some assistance. Probably all that is to be known from external sources is to be found summarised in Professor Mackinnon's article in the *Scotsman* of 12th November, 1889. According to this, MS. No. II was presented to the Faculty of Advocates by the Rev. Donald Macqueen, of Kilmuir, in Skye, who also







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presented the Gaelic version of Bernard Gordon's work to the Antiquaries' Society in 1784.

The *Highland Society's* collection comprises manuscripts belonging at one time to James Macpherson (of Ossianic fame), Ossianic manuscripts of Duncan Kennedy's collection acquired by purchase, the Glenmasan manuscript (now MS. LIII), obtained by Lord Bannatyne from the Rev. Mr. Mackinnon, of Glendaruel, five manuscripts of the Kilbride collection, the Dean of Lismore's book, &c.

The *Kilbride* collection was found by Skene as an heirloom in the family of Major Maclachlan, of Kilbride. He was induced to deposit them for safety in the Advocates' Library. Others left by Skene after his death are among the additional manuscripts, but they are apparently not medical.

All the foregoing manuscripts are so treasured by their custodians that I am not in a position to exhibit them to you except through the medium of photographs; but, by the generous kindness of Professor Mackinnon, I am able to exhibit three other manuscripts not contained in any of the foregoing collections. To these three, which have passed into his possession, I shall presently refer.

In the meantime, let me continue to tell you something more of the manuscripts in the Advocates' Library. By the kind permission of the Faculty of Advocates and their librarian, Mr. Clark, several illustrative photographs have been taken for me by Mr. Drummond Young. From what I have already said you will have observed that of the sixty-six manuscripts in the Advocates' Library (excluding one which has only a medical cover), seventeen are wholly or partly medical. Some are on parchment, some on paper. The medical manuscripts, judging by the handwriting and grammatical forms, belong to the latter part of the sixteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth. Two sheets bound in MS. XIII may be as old as the fifteenth century.

As to their medical ownership, I can only say here that there is internal evidence to show that, like the "*Lilium Medicinum*" and the Laing MS. to which I have already referred, MS. II of the Advocates' collection and MS. XXXIII of the same collection were undoubtedly in the possession of the Bethune or Macbeth families.

The question whether the language is Scottish or Irish Gaelic is probably unanswerable for the earlier manuscripts, and extremely complicated for all. The Kilbride collection was partly gathered in Ireland, partly in the Highlands of Scotland. The contents of the Gaelic medical manuscripts are

largely, if not entirely, compiled and translated from the works of the great physicians of antiquity. In all cases the translations have been made from Latin versions, themselves translated from Arabic, or through Arabic from Greek, and the translators have allowed themselves a certain freedom in translating. As might be expected, the ancient theories of medicine, such as the four elements, the humours, &c., occupy considerable space in some of these documents.

Mr. Anderson points out that in several of the manuscripts the scribes have permitted themselves to relieve the monotony of their task by writing remarks on the margins and in half-filled lines. They grumble occasionally when they are not pleased with the subject. The prayer, "O God, put a good end upon this book's owner," is not meant for irony, any more than is the request at the end that the reader shall pray for the soul of the owner. "O God, bring this book to a good end," is more like a note of weariness, and so perhaps are the pious ejaculations, "O God, help me;" "O Mary, have pity upon me." We meet also with such remarks as "Good is the writing," "Bad is the ink," "It is dark."

In one or two cases a scrap of poetry is written upon the bottom margin, probably from memory. Sometimes there is a note or addition to the text; very occasionally a note from one man to another, such as "A blessing here from Neill to my own companion, Rory O'Siaghail," or, after a different scribe has taken up the work for a space, "That for thee, Angus, and my blessing with it, from Ewing MacPaul."

When the medical MSS. are composite, it may be noted that the contents are less miscellaneous than in other collections. They seem to have been gathered together by some physician for his own use.

The Latin quotations in these MSS. are of great value. They are always explained, often translated, and occasionally glossed in Gaelic, thus helping to define the use of words whose meanings have changed at different periods, and sometimes explaining words now obsolete. Medical expressions were not much used in old Gaelic literature, and many of the words contained in these MSS. are not to be found in any glossary.

The Latin helps also to the extension of Gaelic contractions. And, again, the very peculiar spelling of the Latin, evidently following their own pronunciation, might be made to show the country—France or England—under whose educative influence they stood. In many cases it is evident that the scribes knew no Latin. Occasional changes to suit their pronunciation of



words show not so much that they wrote from dictation, as that they copied by sound.

Through the diligence and palæographic acumen of Mr. Anderson, I have now secured an analysis of all the medical manuscripts in the Advocates' Library collection. If it is your pleasure, this may, perhaps, appear in our *Journal* at some future time, but I should detain you far too long to-day if I were to attempt to read it to you in full on this occasion. I must content myself by indicating to you their character in a few instances.

Thus, MS. No. II is a composite volume containing various MSS. of different sizes bound together, evidently by someone who was incapable of appreciating the contents. The vellum pages near the beginning, reversed in binding, are confused in arrangement and incomplete. They contain a treatise upon diseases arising from the condition of the blood and from the humours, upon fevers, the formation of bone, herbological and philosophical subjects.

On paper, there is a treatise upon the renal secretion, sediments, effects of fever, &c. This is followed by twenty-five and a half leaves, turned upside down in binding, containing charms, a treatise on the veins, diseases of different parts of the year, philosophy, treatises on pregnancy, on fever, on astronomy, medical terms, natural philosophy, fevers, &c. Then a treatise on gout and its remedies (herbological syrups), prescriptions, poison. After this, a treatise on various diseases—shingles ("cerculus"), epilepsy ("ampulla"), gravel (arena), piles (? pilus), scurf ("furfura"), &c., &c. Then a passage on the treatment of the sick (Isidorus).

Upon paper, right side up, is a treatise upon headache, toothache, rheumatism, worms, deafness, &c.; the treatment for a long list of diseases, including broken bones.

The next medical subject is on vellum, of the "flux" of blood. Afterwards, the treatment of stoppages (?) of liver and spleen, of the "yellow sickness" (jaundice?), of dropsy, of "cat chest" (bronchitis?), of diseases of the mouth, difficulty in breathing, and plague.

Another treatise is on wounds and their healing, hydrophobia and its cure, and diseases of the breasts.

There follows next a tract on the virtues of *aqua vite*! Another on the treatment of diseases of the eyes, cataract, &c.; of the teeth, heart diseases, epilepsy, and coma.

Later on we find a panegyric on Hippocrates, beginning with the same words as will be found in Dr. Gillies' paper dealing with a "Gaelic Medical Manuscript of 1563," in the

British Museum, and published in the *Caledonian Medical Journal* (April, 1902, p. 45).

There are two other short treatises which appear to correspond closely with the parts of the manuscript which Dr. Gillies has studied (*loc. cit.*, p. 47), and towards the close of this miscellany there is an article on diseases of the hair.

The whole collection comprised in MS. II is full of references to writers on medicine, especially to Hippocrates and Rhases, but also to Averroes, Isidorus, Platarius, Galen, Bartholomaeus, Theophilus, Jacobus de Forlivio (*cf.* MS. XXVII). In these references the initials alone are often given, or the name in a contracted form. Aristotle is often quoted as "The Philosopher," and Averroes as "The Commentator." In many cases the non-originality of the work is shown by the "*et reliqua*" which very frequently occurs at the end of a paragraph.

But the translation is not continuous. The MSS. seem to be compiled from many sources, with some original additions.

The writing is in many different hands, of scribes in most cases, but also occasionally of the leeches themselves. The Latin is sometimes unintelligible, and it is evident that the scribes' training did not always include that language. The spelling is sometimes the worst possible.

An interesting feature is the frequency of the pen-marks at the top of the page or in the margins—"Amen," "Amen dico vobis," "In nomine patris, filii et spiritus sancti," and so on. On another occasion we find—"Amen dico vobis. A trying of the pen and ink."

In the middle of the paper part is an insertion—"I, man of the bad writing, wrote this in the place of the lord of Ben Eadair (*i.e.*, the Hill of Howth, near Dublin), namely, John Macdonald; far from my own country am I to-day."

A page at the end of the paper part has a short poem, a lament upon parting with "beloved Conall, son of the King of Ireland."

The reverse of this page is scribbled, but it contains the following statements:—"The number of the pages in this book is five score and six." "The book of Malcolm Betune." "Here is the book of Gillecolaim Macbeth; and may everyone who reads this give his blessing for the soul of this book's owner. Amen" (see Plate III).

Now, I should like to draw your attention for a moment to MS. III (see Plate IV). It is a handsome treatise on botany and herbology. It is, in fact, a *materia medica*, arranged in alphabetical order, and its special interest to us at this moment is that it appears to be almost identical with one







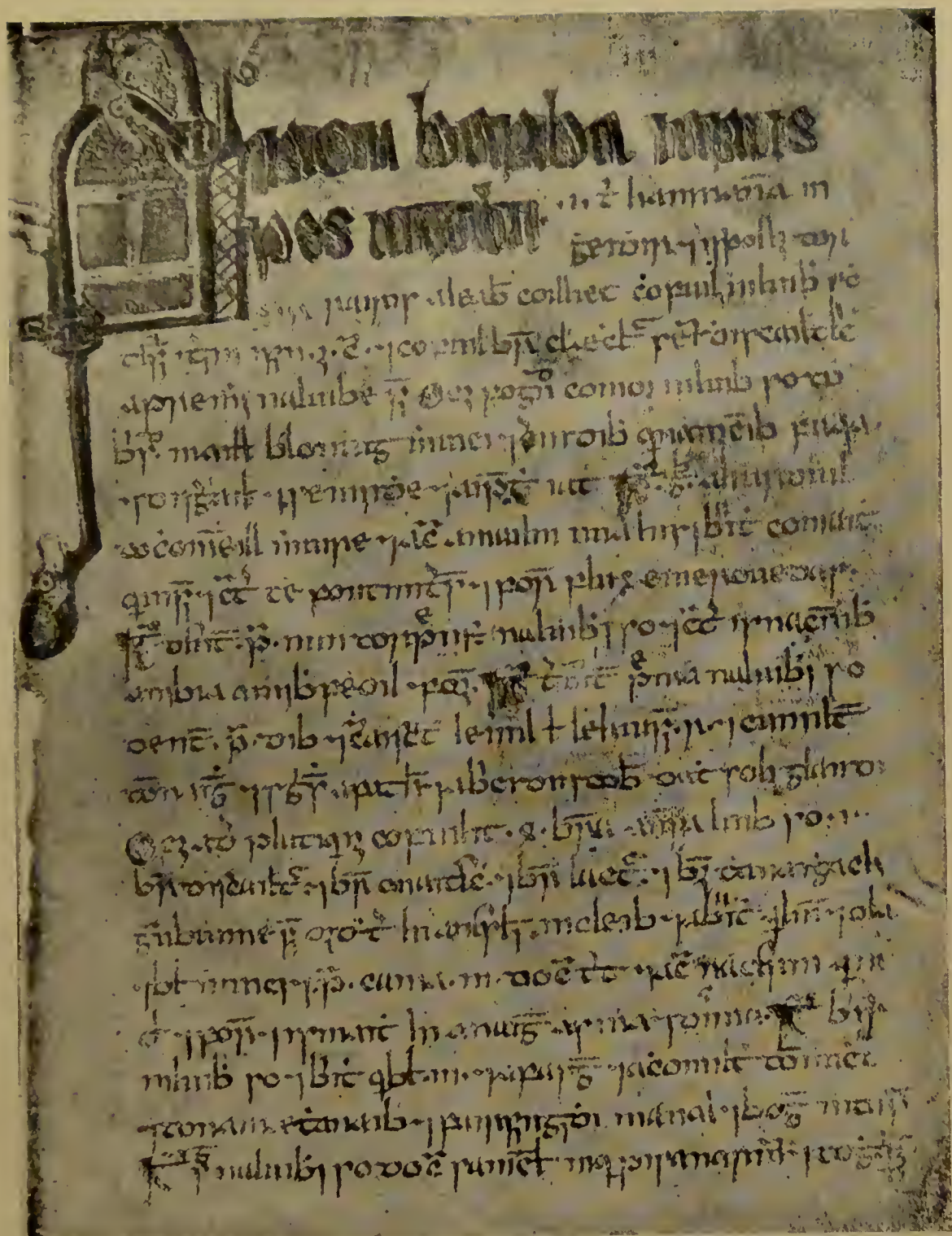


PLATE IV (from the Advocates' MSS. III).—Showing the first page and the finely illuminated initial letter.















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 a. n. j. a. n. l. o. h. d. o. n. a. h. a. m. i. o. i. b. j. a. d. s. a. l. n. a. c. o. j. p. t. j. o. b. e.  
 i. e. i. s. e. n. b. a. l. l. j. m. o. a. t. a. o. p. d. d. o. n. a. b. a. l. t. d. a. n. j. e. t. c. o. p. j. i.  
 j. e. i. o. p. d. s. j. o. p. d. d. o. n. e. i. e. i. j. e. a. d. s. a. n. j. a. n. l. o. h.  
 j. e. o. h. o. p. e. o. i. l. b. j. a. n. j. a. e. i. j. j. o. p. d. d. o. n. e. t. j. p. e. o. i. l. d. a. n. j. j.  
 d. o. n. a. b. j. a. n. b. n. d. o. e. i. f. e. e. n. a. n. i. a. j. e. s. t. a. j. j. i. j. m. e. t. a. a. j. j.  
 d. m. a. j. d. o. c. e. t. o. z. a. t. n. a. b. o. i. l. l. j. n. l. i. n. g. a. o. i. b. j. m. a. n. g. n. e.  
 p. a. d. i. o. p. d. a. t. m. e. i. o. p. d. s. j. o. p. d. n. a. n. j. e. t. j. a. t. a. t.  
 a. d. m. z. n. a. c. l. y. r. o. c. o. p. y. t. j. a. f. o. p. e. o. l. m. a. a. n. j. a. e. i. j. e. o. p. j. i.  
 j. a. f. o. e. l. e. a. n. j. e. n. a. b. j. i. n. a. t. j. a. j. i. d. j. e. l. i. n. g. a. l. j. a. t. a. t. j. j.  
 j. u. a. n. g. e. n. t. a. n. o. n. e. j. t. a. n. j. a. c. c. e. m. d. o. n. s. e. n. t. a. j. u. l. t. j.  
 a. n. j. t. a. n. g. n. e. e. m. b. r. u. o. o. m. a. t. a. a. j. f. a. n. j. a. n. b. i. n. a. p. o. m. a.

PLATE VII (from the Advocates' MSS. XIII-2) illustrates the use of contractions  
 in the text.





of the MSS. which Professor Mackinnon has been good enough to lend me, and which I have here to show you, as well as the Crawford MS., whose headings are translated and published by Whitley Stokes in the *Academy* (16th May, 1896, pp. 405-407).<sup>1</sup> A very similar pharmacopœia is contained in MS. LX of the Advocates' collection, as we shall see presently.

MS. X is well written upon ten large leaves. It is a treatise on disease, fevers, diet, &c., &c., compiled from Hippocrates, Galen, Rhases, Isidorus, Isaac, Averroes, Serapion, John of Damascus, Aristotle, and the "Commentators." Their opposing views are discussed (see Plate V).

MS. XII contains twenty-one large leaves. The ink is somewhat faded, except upon six leaves. The first five folios contain, in the upper part, a calendar; in the lower part, a treatise on anatomy—bones, parts of the face, the neck, the shoulder blades, the fore-arm, the sinews. Folios six and seven deal with natural history. From folio eight to the end is philosophical and physiological, containing a treatise on the senses, &c. (see Plate VI).

MS. XIII is composite, containing parts of different MSS., amounting in all to thirty-eight leaves. It is well written throughout. The first MS. has several illuminated initials. It is a treatise on medical subjects, abstract and practical, including chapters upon treatment of the sick, the diverse temperaments, heredity, sight and smell, comparison of the mind and the temperaments, with members, the liver and stomach, the greater deadliness of warm than of cold diseases, the use of medicine, especially with regard to the different temperaments; the occasions when no food or medicine should be given to the sick, chronic diseases, convalescence, the different climates, advice to doctors, the treatment of paralytics, &c., &c.

Reference is made to Isidorus chiefly, and also Damascenus, Seneca, "Salumon Legere," Aristotle, Averroes, Galen, "Antadur," Avicenna, Apollonius.

The second MS. (in XIII) is even more contracted than usual. The photograph (Plate VII) shows some illustrations of these contractions. Its contents purport to be general medicine, and the distinctions between its parts. It treats of medicine, practical and theoretical, but is incomplete. Reference is made to Galen and Isaac, also to Aristotle, Averroes, Senmora.

The third MS. (in XIII) is incomplete at both ends. It is chiefly derived from Hippocrates, and has some paragraphs

<sup>1</sup> I have to thank Professor Mackinnon for this reference.

similar to paragraphs in MS. XIV. It treats of symptoms of diseases, fevers, purgings, &c. Reference is made to Galen, Averroes, and others.

The fourth MS. is a fragment, consisting of but two sheets, cut and folded to bind in with the rest. The bottom of the page is stitched into the back. It is in a somewhat older hand, written with a broad pen, and has ornamental initials. There are comparatively few contractions. The subjects are diseases arising from the humours, and the different kinds of meats and of milk (see Plate VIII).

MS. XX contains six large leaves. It begins in mid-sentence. It consists of chapters upon different kinds of fevers, "from red blood" and "from impure blood," "etica," diabetes, &c.; on the breast, its diseases and their cures, &c.

MS. XXI has eight leaves, and is beautifully written (Plate IX). It may be an older MS. It begins "Et adei G(alen)," and goes on with contractions rather difficult to decipher. This is a treatise upon gynæcological subjects and sundry disorders. It is translated from Hippocrates, with a few words quoted in Latin for the headings, and glossed in Gaelic. On folio six, in the middle margin, is written, "The third part."

MS. XXXIII contains first a calendar on vellum, with notes upon the diet for the various months, &c. The rest is on paper, very worn and ragged. It is written chiefly in a later hand, sloping, scrawly, but legible. It is described by Maclachlan in his *Analysis* (No. XI, pp. 117 ff.), where he would date it in 1538. It contains, according to him, an essay on anatomy, taken from Galen, and treating of the brain, heart, liver, and kidneys; a physiological treatise on the brain, the senses, the nerves, the heart and pulse, the stomach and digestion, the sexual organs, spells, medical aphorisms, a tract on urine. The transcriber of the last essay is Donald Mac an Olla (son of the physician), at that time in Donegal, Ulster. On the first page stands, in Latin, "John Macbeth is this book's possessor; Culrathine, 22 April, 1700." On the last page is, "The book of Gille-Colum Macbeth."

MS. LX is a thick quarto paper MS. Several pages at the beginning are headed "Liber tertius." The MS. is written partly in Latin, partly in Gaelic. It is a compendious treatise on medicine, containing in the earlier part chapters on such subjects as fevers, urine, convulsions, tabes, tumours, gynæcological subjects, desipiency (imbecility?), melancholia, apoplexy, vomiting, fever again, erysipelas, lupus, anthrax, carbuncle, herpes, fistula, cancer, lupus again, leprosy,





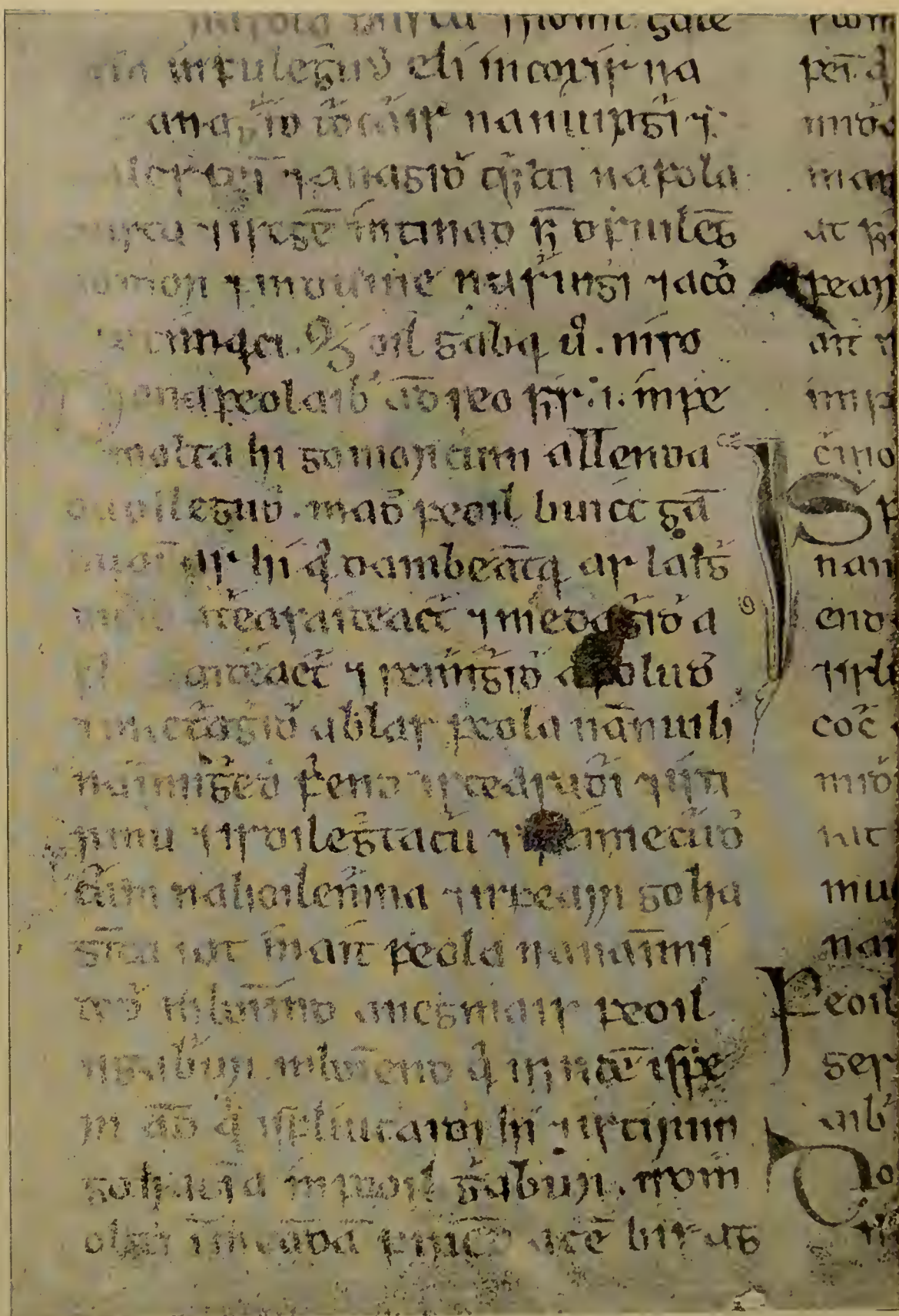


PLATE VIII (from the Advocates' MSS. XIII-4) shows bold writing, ornamented initials, and few contractions.



[illegible]

aroacti luntor pbro manduq apoloz pial  
 qd uol uitate uatre Sa. m. gne penati  
 mē bāt dē dōy dū qū qūo rō pbro tūal  
 māt dāt enoy nolunt rō rō dāt uat  
 māt pot piam mē pbro ambatō bī  
 pā dē pō pbro bī pī pī dāt apulicō  
 pbro dāt pī pī dāt mē mē mē mē  
 pō dāt dāt pī dāt mē mē mē mē  
 pō dāt dāt pī dāt mē mē mē mē  
 māt qū mē mē mē mē mē mē mē  
 e. lō dāt pī dāt aro. e. gne dāt mē mē

dicitur ad dnm dnm bny  
 dnm bny dnm bny dnm bny  
 e. n. p. d. n. m. s. n. e. d. n. p. d.

ff. 101. v. 101. r.

11. **UENIEN** **YJMSION**

et istem statum 2.0

[illegible]

PLATE IX (from the Advocates' MSS. XXI) shows a scribal note at the top of the page. In the right hand column are a few lines of Latin, glossed with Gaelic words above. Below the left column are two holes in the parchment.



morphea, pustules, gout, different forms of eczema, ulcers, sores, panaricium, baldness, "asperitas," grey hair, scurf, "lues . . . sine tumore," skin diseases, parasites, "dolor corporis," migraine, vertigo, loss of memory, congelation, sleep, insomnia, exercise, stupor, mania, humours, inebriety, "incubus," epilepsy, apoplexy, paralysis, spasms, tetanus, trembling, the muscles, "tortura"; the eyes, cataract, tunica cornea; the ears, nose, throat, tongue, teeth, lips; the voice, coughing; the lungs, phthisis, congestion, asthma, pleurisy; the heart, the pulse, the arteries, palpitations; the breast, digestion; the stomach, drink, hunger and thirst, nausea, bile, diarrhœa, dysentery, colic, "mirachia," worms "and serpents," hæmorrhoids, piles, chaps; the liver, the spleen; the kidneys, urine, diabetes, &c., &c. The few references are to Galen, from whom probably the most part is taken. There are treatises on medicine, practical and abstract; tables, with a reference to "Gordonius"; at one place a list of diseases in Latin, with glosses in Gaelic. There is also a copy of a letter from the school of Salerno to the king of England. There are many interesting scribal notes, giving dates at different stages of the work, chiefly from March to December, 1612. The place is also given occasionally, for example, "I am in Ardchonnell, in the company of Duncan, son of John, son of Donald, son of Duncan y Conchobair; the age of the Lord at this time, 1612, the 23rd day of August. I am Angus, son of Ferchar, son of Angus. . . ." "In the year of the Lord 1612, the 28th day of November. In Dunnolly am I, in the company of Duncan y Conchobair." This MS. also contains a pharmacopœia of some one hundred and sixty pages, similar in contents to that of MS. III. It refers to Rhases, Platarius, Mesue, John of Damascus, &c. After this is a treatise on the subjects and divisions of medicine, a fragment taken from "Master Richard" (Maigister Ricairdi).

I only wish, finally, to bring before you the three manuscripts which Professor Mackinnon has so kindly afforded us the opportunity of seeing to-day.

The first consists of thirteen leaves, and is practically a pharmacopœia, giving the names of plants, minerals, and woods in alphabetical order, with their medicinal properties. May I, in submitting it to you for your inspection, ask you to be most careful in the handling of the leaves, and may I, at the same time, point out some features of interest? As is so often the case in these old pieces of parchment, holes are to be found interfering at parts with the continuity of the writing. The scribes sometimes filled up the gap, at others ignored it,



and continued their line of caligraphy at the opposite side of the opening. But the frequent occurrence of such apertures in these manuscripts has led to a certain proverb in Gaelic, which Professor Mackinnon has kindly drawn my attention to, namely, "*An toll a mhill an t-seiche*," which, being translated, means "The hole that spoilt the hide," and is applied to a sign of weakness which blenishes an otherwise fine character.

The second manuscript is probably a commentary on the "De Anima" of Aristotle, or one of the mediæval documents based upon it. It consists of eight leaves, and contains some physical and some medical matter. It commences with the words "Quinque sunt potencię," but the initial letter is not formed. It has presumably been left blank for the illuminator to fill in at a later date.

The third commences with a quotation in Latin—"Tria sunt subjecta medicinę, &c.," as says Master Richard—and appears to start from the proposition that the science of medicine has three divisions.

These three manuscripts belonged at one time to Dr. Donald Smith, who died in 1805, and who was the brother of the Rev. John Smith, of Campbeltown. They passed to his nephew, the late Duncan Smith, of the firm of Tennant & Co., chemical manufacturers in Glasgow, and they were given to Professor Mackinnon by Mrs. Macfadyen, a niece of Mr. Duncan Smith.

Now, I must draw to a conclusion. I fear I have already detained you too long. I trust that I have said enough to prove to you that the old Highland doctors who prepared and owned these MSS. were not quacks nor incantationists, but men abreast of the science of their day. They ought to be kept in remembrance.

Gentlemen, let me add one word about ourselves. The little coterie of Highland fellow-students to whose Celtic enthusiasm we owe our union has expanded into a world-wide association of medical men, whose opportunities for personal acquaintance are rare, and whose years of graduation are separated by nearly a generation as we count the human span. It appears to me that the time has come when we should endeavour to strengthen the bond which unites us, and offer a fresh inducement to new members to join us by co-operating in some definite piece of work which will perpetuate the traditions of our race, and—shall I say?—more completely justify our corporate existence. What this work should be is a matter which we may, and I think should, discuss. The

suggestion which I have to offer to-day is not new. It has been floating in our midst, and it has found expression in our *Journal* on several occasions. For my part, I cannot conceive a task more obviously lying to our hand than that of transcribing, translating, or at least rendering intelligible to our contemporaries such Gaelic medical manuscripts as have been preserved to us. This appears to me to be a duty which we owe to the antiquaries whose zeal has led to their preservation. It is a service which we ought to render to our country, and by its accomplishment we should rear a memorial to the men from whom we are proud to trace our professional descent.











